IX. RELIGION

Supreme Being

776 Suku is the name of the most important dead person mentioned by the Ovimbundu. Ngunga says that Suku made mountains, rivers, sky, and people. The name Suku is known all over the great territory inhabited by the Ovimbundu. I have seen at the *ombala* of Ngalangi a small house of meditation where the king retires accompanied by an old woman. This retirement for communion with spirits of the dead takes place in time of drought, and a gourd filled with water is always kept in the house. In another village of the Ngalangi region I photographed a house of meditation for the king who retires for communion with spirits whenever he is troubled (Plate LXXXIX, Fig. 1). The painted marks on the door are said to be an indication to spirits that this is the king's house of meditation, but there is no reason for saying that the king communes with Suku.

The evidence regarding Suku was supplemented at Ngalangi by two Ovimbundu boys who agreed that Suku was very important. They associated Suku with rain; but the word *suku* does not mean rain, water, or food; these are expressed by *ombela*, *ovua*, and *okuhia*, respectively. I know of no meaning of the word *suku* which might assist in explaining the attributes of this respected spirit. Names of medicine-men are remembered and used but they are not associated with the name Suku. My informants at Ngalangi said that names of kings are sometimes coupled with the name Suku.

• 773 At Ngalangi an informant stated that in the beginning everything was water. A man dropped from above, caused land to appear, and began hunting. At the side of a stream he saw an animal that disappeared beneath the water. He was about to shoot when he saw that the animal was a person something like himself, yet different. He took the animal home, mated with it, and reared a family. This story is told also at Cilesu, about two hundred miles from Ngalangi. At Ngalangi I was informed that the first being was a calf with human attributes, who walked about on the rocks leaving mixed tracks of an animal and human kind, which may be seen to this day.

Survival after Death

775 787 There are ideas of reincarnation. Two Ballundu boys said that the lion was considered to be a powerful old man. If a lion is found dead divination is practised to discover the cause of death. If a